W. C. BONNERJEE

A SKETCH OF

His Life and Career

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WOMESH CHUNDER BONNERJEE.

OF few words, Mr. W. C. Bonnerjee was great in deed. He was made in one of Nature's generous moods. Intellect, luck, wealth, power over men, character,—all were given him in a large measure. He stood a giant among his countrymen. India was too narrow for this colossus. If he had been born in Europe, nations would have hung on his word. When a *Gandharva* of old sinned, he was doomed to pass a life in the contracted sphere of Aryavarta.

Yet Mr. Bonnerjee bore his greatness lightly, as only Nature's great men do. Almost the Dictator of Congress, he seemed scarcely conscious of his power. His soul dwelt apart from all faction, strife, or jealousy. He was too high for personal rivalry or envy. The arbiter of all differences, India hath need of thee at this hour! He carried with him unaffected smiles, oil for troubled waters, and rupees that never jingled. Like the ideal schoolmaster his presence was

always felt, but seldom seen. To young Congressmen he is unknown personally, having removed his activities to England for some years. But his memory pervades the Congress pandal, and his name can hush for a moment even the voice of discord. Here was a Cæsar, when comes such another!

His success at the Bar, which far transcended all ordinary measure, was paralleled only by the result of his advocacy of Congress. He it was that netted Pandit Ajudhia Nath, Mr. George Yule, and Charles Bradlaugh. Who else could have won for India the championship of the bravest soldier of freedom of modern times? Twenty years ago, when the great movement was started, and they wanted for their first President a man of true elevation of soul and unchallenged weight, they could think of none but W. C. Bonnerjee. Since that time he held the first place in the Congress Council, sharing it for some time with Mr. Dadabhai Naoroji till the G. O. M. settled in England and being its sole occupant subsequently till he too followed. Only those who attended the Subjects Committee Meetings, at which the work of Congress is really shaped, can know the reverence with which his advice was listened to and the consummate tact

and wisdom that he brought to bear on the settlement of differences. Long ago we learned to be independent of Mr. A. O. Hume, and get along with only his bright example and an occasional letter to rouse our flagging zeal. For some years past we have been, so far as Congress work in India is concerned, independent of Mr. W. C. Bonnerjee too. For while life lasted it was not possible for him to withold from the British Committee the benefits of his unrivalled knowledge or of his unexampled munificence. So it must be with all movements that have to last beyond a lifetime. The first leaders must infuse a self-perpetuating principle into their constitution so that the succession of leaders may be both continuous and efficient. We live in our descendants. As the Sanskrit proverb says, the father is born again in the son, and is proud to be eclipsed by him. Nothing betrays the unworthy leader so much as a fear that power is slipping through his fingers or retirement from the helm with offended dignity at the first sight of a junior begging to be taught the secret.

Mr. W. C. Bonnerjee was born at Kidderpore, in his grandfather's estate, in December 1844, the

same year in which Mr. Budruddin Tyabji, was born. His grandfather, Babu Pitambar Bonnerjee, was banian of a firm of attorneys in Calcutta named Collier, Bird & Co. His eldest son, Grees Chandra, first entered his father's office as clerk, and, after being articled to two lawyers successively, passed the attorney's examination in 1859 and finally became partner of a firm named Judge and Bonnerjee. His practical knowledge of law and skill in conveyancing were remarkable. The subject of our sketch was Grees Chandra's second son. He thus came of a family of lawyers, and it was from his father's firm that he got his first case at the Calcutta Bar. His career at school was not promising, private theatricals proving a stronger attraction than books. First at the Oriental Seminary, then at the Hindu School, he received some education till 1861 when he ought to have appeared for the Matriculation Examination. Instead, however, his father got him articled to an attorney named W. P. Downing. Next year he joined the office of Mr. W. F. Gallanders, and acquired an intimate and thorough knowledge of the art of writing out deeds and pleadings that was to stand him in good stead later on. It was during this part

of his career that he established the *Bengalee* as a weekly newspaper,—the first manifestation of that public spirit which could not be suppressed even by the most absorbing legal practice.

In 1864 he competed for, and being the only competitor obtained, one of the five scholarships which Mr. Rustomji Jamsetji Jeejeebhai had founded for the benefit of Indian students proceeding to England for the study of law. He joined the Middle Temple where his good fortune procured him the tuition of two eminent lawyers, T. H. Dart and Edward Fry. Here one of his fellow-students was Mr. Budruddin Tyabji, who was to share with him for many years the honours and the anxieties of political leadership. While studying law, he took part in the establishment of the London Indian Society, which has since become a powerful factor in Indian politics. In 1867 he was called to the Bar and set up practice in the High Court of Calcutta next year. His first brief has been already referred to. It was but the beginning of what was to become the most extensive and lucrative practice of any barrister in India. His strong memory, prodigious industry, and genial disposition combined with early training in the business of the attor-

ney and the ungrudging professional help of a thriving barrister named Pitt-Kennedy raised him to the very top of the Bar. There were only two other Indian barristers before him,—Mr. Michael Madhu Sudan Dutta and Mr. Mano Mohan Ghose. The former did not take his profession seriously, while the latter cared only for mofussil practice in the criminal line. Though thus almost without an Indian rival, Mr. Bonnerjee seems at first to have suffered for his colour. He himself told a friend that "at the outset he received but scant courtesy from those members of the legal profession (attorneys, presumably) who were of his own race. Some fought shy of him before he had obtained a certain footing at the Bar, others, indeed, were jealous of the young practitioner who, conscious of his superior strength, looked down upon them sometimes with a disdainful smile." His father had died just before he joined the Calcutta Bar, but his place in the firm had been taken by his uncle Babu Joykissen Gangooly. Other relations too and friends Mr. Bonnerjee had among members of the legal profession. Among his best patrons and well-wishers at this time was an influential member of the aristocracy named Maharaja Kamal Krishna,

Bahadur. To this gentleman Mr. Bonnerjee paid to the end the greatest respect and showed the liveliest gratitude. He always stood bare-legged in his presence and named his eldest son, after him, Kamal Krishna Shelley Bonnerjee. One of the early ambitions to which he gave playful expression was that he should earn ten thousand rupees a month. This he realised in a very short time, and his income at its highest often exceeded twice that amount. Though latterly he spent half the year in England, he was often engaged by cable in important cases, and his assistants met him in Bombay and instructed him on the way to Calcutta. He gave a helping hand, whenever he could, to deserving juniors, and some Englishmen have been recipients of his generosity. He officiated as Standing Counsel for four years, and declined a Judgeship of the High Court more than once. It would have been a strange thing if he had given up his unique income at the Bar for a third or a quarter of it on the Bench. He rendered eminent services to the public in espousing the causes of Messrs. Surendra Nath Bannerjee and Robert Knight, two Editors whose outspoken and fearless criticism had made them obnoxious to the powers-that-be. His

career as a Lawyer may be summed up in the semi-official pronouncement of Mr. Sinha, Officiating Advocate-General.

His career at the Bar was one of exceptional brilliance. Within a few years he almost reached to the top of his profession. On the Original Side, I venture to think, there has not been, for at least many, many years, a practitioner in whom the Judges, the Attorneys, and the litigating public had the same amount of confidence as they had in Mr. Bonnerjee. After having attained to the highest practice possible on the Original Side, Mr. Bonnerjee commenced to practise on the Appellate Side, and his success on that side was as rapid as on the Original Side of this Court. A sound lawyer, a perfect draughtsman, and a brilliant cross-examiner, Mr. Bonnerjee was to many of us the ideal of a perfect Advocate of this Court. His merit was appreciated both by the public and the Government of this country, and in 1883, he was appointed to act as Standing Counsel to the Government of India, which appointment he held for more than four years.

Official honours came to him in due course. He was appointed a Fellow of the Calcutta University in 1880, became President of the Law Faculty in 1886, and represented the University in the Bengal Legislative Council in 1894 and 1895. To this period Mr. Romesh Chunder Dutt refers in these terms:

In 1894 and 1895, Mr. Bonnerjee and I worked together in the Bengal Legislative Council. I had been nominated by the Government, and Mr. Bonnerjee held the higher position of being elected by the people. We seldom differed in our views, and on more than one occasion Mr. Bonnerjee's manly fight for his countrymen was fruitful of good results.

The official recognition, however, that was extended to him is nothing to the honours that the nation paid him. It was in 1885 that Bombay witnessed the first Session of the Indian National Congress, destined to become the instrument of untold good to the country as well as "the soundest triumph of British administration and a crown of glory to the British nation." Mr. W.C. Bonnerjee has himself told the story of the origin of the Congress. It deserves to be repeated here, as it has, unscathed, run the gauntlet flung down to it by the indiscreet and injudicious biographer of the Marquis of Dufferin and Ava.

It will probably be news to many that the Indian National Congress, as it was originally started and as it has since been carried on, is in reality the work of the Marquis of Dufferin and Ava when that nobleman was Governor-General of India. Mr. A. O. Hume, C.B., had, in 1884, conceived the idea that it would be of great advantage to the country if leading Indian politicians could be brought together once a year to discuss social matters and be upon friendly footing with one another. He did not desire that politics should form part of their discussion, for there were recognised political bodies in Calcutta, Bombay, Madras and other parts of India, and he thought that these bodies might suffer in importance if, when Indian politicians from different parts of the country came together, they discussed politics. His idea further was that the Governor of the Province where the politicians met should be asked to preside over them and that thereby greater cordiality should be established between the official classes and the non-official Indian politicians. Full of these ideas he saw the noble Marquis when he went to Simla early in 1885 after having in the

December previous assumed the Viceroyalty of India. Lord Dufferin took great interest in the matter and after considering over it for some time he sent for Mr. Hume and told him that, in his opinion, Mr. Hume's project would not be of much use. He said there was no body of persons in this country who performed the functions which Her Majesty's Opposition did in England. The newspapers, even if they really represented the views of the people, were not reliable, and as the English were necessarily ignorant of what was thought of them and their policy in native circles, it would be very desirable in the interests as well of the rulers as of the ruled that Indian politicians should meet yearly and point out to the Government in what respects the administration was defective and how it could be improved ; and he added that an assembly such as he proposed should not be presided over by the local Governor, for in his presence the people might not like to speak out their minds. Mr. Hume was convinced by Lord Dufferin's arguments and when he placed the two schemes, his own and Lord Dufferin's before leading politicians in Calcutta, Bombay, Madras, and other parts of the country, the latter unanimously accepted Lord Dufferin's scheme and proceeded to give effect to it. Lord Dufferin had made it a condition with Mr. Hume that his name in connection with the scheme of the Congress should not be divulged so long as he remained in the country, and this condition was faithfully maintained and none but the men consulted by Mr. Hume knew anything about the matter.

A proud man must Mr. Bonnerjee have been when at the first gathering in Bombay of the hundred best men in all India, Mr. A. O. Hume proposed, the Hon. Mr. S. Subrahmania Aiyar (now Sir Justice) seconded, and the Hon. Mr. K. T. Telang supported, the motion that "Mr. W. C. Bonnerjee, Standing Counsel, Bengal, be invited to assume the Office of Pre-

sident of the Congress." His opening speech was characteristically short. It could not be shorter, —or more weighty. He first claimed that the Congress was representative.

Surely never had so important and comprehensive an assemblage occurred within historical times on the soil of India. He claimed for it an entirely representative character. It was true that, judged from the standard of the House of Commons, they were not representatives of the people of India in the sense the members of the House were representatives of the constituencies. But if community of sentiments, community of feelings, and community of wants enabled any one to speak on behalf of others, then assuredly they might justly claim to be the representatives of the people of India. It might be said that they were self-elected, but that was not so. The news that this Congress would be held had been known throughout the year in the different provinces of India, and they all knew that everywhere the news had been received with great satisfaction by the people at large, and though no formal elections had been held, the representatives had been selected by all the different Associations and Bodies, and he only wished that all thus selected had been able to attend, instead of their having now to lament the absence of many valued coadjutors, whose attendance had been unhappily barred by various unfortunate circumstances.

It is somewhat curious to read at this distance of time the tentative, vague, and perhaps too obvious statement that the President made at the time of the objects of the Congress:

(*a*) The promotion of personal intimacy and friendship amongst all the more earnest workers in our country's cause in the (sic various ?) parts of the Empire.

(*b*) The eradication by direct friendly personal intercourse of all possible race, creed, or provincial prejudices

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amongst all lovers of our country, and the fuller development and consolidation of those sentiments of national unity that had their origin in their beloved Lord Ripon's ever memorable reign.

(*c*) The authoritative record after this has been carefully elicited by the fullest discussion of the matured opinions of the educated classes in India on some of the more important and pressing of the social questions of the day.

(*d*) The determination of the lines upon and methods by which during the next twelve months it is desirable for native politicians to labour in the public interests.

The concluding paragraph contains one of those protestations of loyalty that in the early years of Congress every speaker thought it necessary to make in defence of himself and of the movement in general. Though perhaps the young Congressman of the present day considers it galling to be under the necessity of repeating these sentiments of loyalty, the time is not altogether past when suspicion of the basic motives of the movement may break out on a large scale. Indeed, such a suspicion has now gained ground in the mind of our enemies to quite as large an extent as ever.

Surely there was nothing in these objects to which any sensible and unprejudiced man could possibly take exception, and yet on more than one occasion remarks had been made by gentlemen, who should have been wiser, condemning the proposed Congress, as if it were a nest of conspirators and disloyalists. Let him say once for all, and in this he knew well after the long informal discussions that they had had amongst themselves on

the previous day, that he was only expressing the sentiments of every gentleman present, that there were no more thoroughly loyal and consistent well-wishers of the British Government than were himself and the friends around him. In meeting to discuss in an orderly and peaceable manner questions of vital importance affecting their well-being, they were following the only course by which the constitution of England enabled them to represent their views to the ruling authority. Much had been done by Great Britain for the benefit of India, and the whole country was truly grateful to her for it. She had given them order, she had given them railways, and, above all, she had given them the inestimable blessing of Western education. But a great deal still remained to be done. The more progress the people made in education and material prosperity, the greater would be the insight into political matters and the keener their desire for political advancement. He thought that their desire to be governed according to the ideas of Government prevalent in Europe was in no way incompatible with their thorough loyalty to the British Government. All that they desired was that the basis of the Government should be widened and that the people should have their proper and legitimate share in it. The discussions that would take place in this Congress would, he believed, be as advantageous to the ruling authorities as he was sure it would be to the people at large.

For the second Congress in Calcutta in 1886 Mr. W. C. Bonnerjee laboured hard. At the actual Session, his main business was the piloting of a proposition on the Jury System in India. Indeed, this subject he made one of his specialities in Congress. It was intended to secure finality for verdicts of acquittal, the power having been recently given to District Judges of referring cases to the High Court when they happened to

differ from such verdicts. There was great opposition to this, for in those early days public opinion had not assumed a definiteness on many matters. In the end Mr. Bonnerjee and Mano Mohan Ghose were together able to clear many misconceptions and get the proposition accepted by a large majority. The only other proposition he moved was to the effect that Standing Congress Committees should be formed in all the provinces of India, for without them "it is quite impossible to keep up a regular correspondence between all the different parts of the country and so to arrive in due time at a general agreement as to the various questions on which action is to be taken at the Congress."

At the Third Congress in Madras in 1887, Mr. Bonnerjee proposed the name of the President, Mr. Budruddin Tyabji, his old friend and fellow-student in England. Mr. Tyabji was doubly welcome for himself and for the race that he represented. Mr. Bonnerjee naturally referred to the significance of the choice, and in these days when designed efforts are being made to set the communities by the ears and a few innocent Muhammadans are gulled into anti-Hindu demonstrations, it is just as well to quote an early

statement of the Congress attitude in the matter by such a leader as our hero.

But in this connection, it is necessary for me to remind you that he is also a Mahomedan gentleman. I am very sorry, indeed, to have to say it, but there is no disguising the fact, that in Bengal, in some quarters, amongst our Mahomedan friends, some misapprehension as to the scope and objects of our National Congress still exists, and it is absolutely necessary that that misapprehension should be removed, and that we should be in fact, as we are in thought, one community and one country, owing allegiance to one Sovereign. The misapprehension under which those Mahomedan gentlemen (some of them at least) labour, who do not cordially sympathise with us, is due, I believe, to an apprehension that the question of "Representative Government" which was presented to the Congress of the year 1885, which was again pressed by the Congress of the year 1886, and which, I believe, will be once more urged by us here will not, if given effect to, practically prove to be conducive to the interests of the Mahomedan population of this country. I am very glad to hear these murmurs of dissent from this assembly of delegates, a large number of whom, I see, are Mahomedans, because, I was just going to say that this apprehension was perfectly unfounded. There is nothing in the objects and scope of this National Congress, which can, directly or indirectly be in any way inimical to the interests of our Mahomedan fellow-countrymen, or of any other section of the community. We want a representative Government in its truest and best sense, and I, for one,—and I am speaking in this matter on behalf of, I believe, the whole of the Hindu delegates—do not desire a hole and corner representation, but a representation of every community in the country, so that the whole of India may be perfectly represented to the governing authorities—so that their grievances may be remedied—so that everything necessary to make the nation contented and happy, may be done by the governing authorities. It is not necessary for me to detain you at any length upon this subject, as I see we are all agreed upon it.

At this Congress, too, the President had great difficulty in conducting the proceedings, for several propositions were either opposed or often amended. The one on Military Colleges evoked a great deal of criticism, and at one stage the expression *native of India* was introduced. At once up rose a delegate and asked for its meaning. The President appealed to Mr. W. C. Bonnerjee who made it the occasion for advancing one of the principles of Congress:

I thought it was well known, that all Hindus, all Mahomedans, all Parsees, all Eurasians, all East Indians and all domiciled Europeans, and all persons born in India of domiciled parents are, in the eye of the law, "*natives of India*," and are defined to be so by statute. The words "*as defined by statute*" have to be introduced, because they will prevent misunderstanding on the part of such of our brethren as are Eurasians, East Indians, or domiciled Europeans, or the children of these, all of whom are really included in the legal term "*native of India*." We are now perfectly agreed that these Colleges should be for the benefit of the whole of India. Let it not be said that this Congress has put anything in such an uncertain way that it might hereafter be said that Eurasians and East Indians and domiciled Europeans were not included in the term "*native of India*."

Next year Mr. W. C. Bonnerjee proceeded to England for the sake of his health, but did not take his time altogether easily. With the help of Mr. Dadabhai and some English friends, he succeeded in establishing a political agency for India in England. He also addressed several meetings

in different parts of that country to make known Indian grievances and rouse the Imperial public to a sense of their duties to India. These speeches exhibit Mr. Bonnerjee's style of speaking at its best. Plain, brief, direct, entirely free from claptrap and finely-turned sentiments, they yet show perfect mastery of the facts and a business-like method of exposition. They are pervaded by a tone of perfect loyalty to the Government of Britain and by a degree of faith in the love of justice of the British nation which seems to us now-a-days to have savoured of the romantic. A few passages are culled from his English utterances to show his political views.

On the Russian scare, and the best solution thereof, he said :

When Russia was thousands of miles away from India, and was gradually civilising Central Asia, it used to be the cry, that as soon as Russia came to a place called Merv, she would seize India. Russia reached Merv many years ago, and India still remains an English possession ; and I am in a position to say on behalf of my countrymen—I am a Native of India and belong to one of the various castes, which caste is the caste of Brahmin—in a position to tell you that they would no more allow Russia, notwithstanding the neglect with which they have been treated, to take India, than they would allow the Hottentots to do so. My countrymen are loyal to England to the backbone. They will, when necessity arises, fight shoulder to shoulder with Englishmen for the purpose of retaining English Rule and sending away any intruder.

Your Tories do not understand that: they wish to keep everybody down with a firm hand. Your Tory does not believe it is possible to rule by affection, and to claim the good-will and the willing service of the people. He only believes in his big army, with its big guns, some of which, as you have heard to-night, cost £200 to fire one shot. I do not believe that Russia has the slightest inimical intention towards India. For the purpose of preventing Russia going to India money is being wanted in the way Dr. Aubrey has referred to, and in order to provide money for this purpose the Government of India has actually raised the tax upon salt which, as I have before said, is one of the necessaries of life of the people.

Sir James Fitzjames Stephen, who added a few obnoxious provisions to our Penal Code, came in for a hard knock or two:

In the year 1870, to our very great misfortune, Sir James Fitzjames Stephen was appointed law member of the Viceroy's Council. He went out to India and the first thing he took in hand was called "The Amendment of the Criminal Procedure Code." That amendment consisted in this – that he took away the finality from the verdict of the jury; he gave the power which no judge in India had ever possessed before, of enhancing sentences on appeal; and he made the Criminal Procedure Code almost Draconian in its severity. You have, I have no doubt, heard that the people of India, are as law-abiding as any people on the earth—and yet in a country like that the Criminal Procedure Code has been made the severest of any in the civilised world. I will tell you what happened under this law. This is an instance, you may call it an extreme instance, but it took place, and there are others which take place every day, to the great oppression of the people of the country, who protest, but nobody listens to their protest. A man was tried in one of the districts in Bengal for murder. The trial took place, not before a jury, but before what are called assessors—two assessors and a judge. The judge con-

curring with the two assessors, found the man not guilty of murder, but found him guilty of manslaughter, and sentenced him to hard labour for five years. He appealed against his conviction—he had the right of appeal, the trial having been held with the aid of assessors and not with the aid of a jury. The case came before the High Court of Calcutta. He was a poor man and could not be properly represented. The judges upset the conviction as regards manslaughter, found the man guilty of murder, sentenced him to be hanged, and notwithstanding petitions for mercy from nearly the whole country that man was hanged. He had in the meantime undergone nearly two months of that imprisonment, so that he was kept in rigorous imprisonment for two months, and at the end of that was hanged. Now this created such a shock in the minds of the people that it is impossible to describe the sensation in the country at the time; everybody wept aloud almost, but there was nobody to take any notice of that. Our district officers thought that the prestige of the High Court would be lost if the Government interfered and allowed that man to live. The High Court had the power, and could have sentenced him to transportation for life; but no—the man was sentenced to be hanged, and hanged he was accordingly. There are many instances where a man has been fined, after Sir James Fitzjames Stephen's law he has appealed, and the result has been that the judges, instead of affirming the fine, have sent him to hard labour for many months. Now I saw the scene created in this country when it was reported, and truly reported, that some Country Court Judges in Ireland has enhanced the sentences on appeal. There was a tremendous outburst, and the result was that even Mr. Balfour was obliged to send instructions to his Country Court Judges not to enhance sentences on appeal. But a thing like this goes on in India almost every day. The people cry aloud against it, but there is nobody to pay heed to their cry.

Here is another:

This very Sir James Fitzjames Stephen passed what is called the Evidence Act for India. It is the substance

of Pitt Taylor's book boiled down considerably. Well, one clause he has introduced is that at a criminal trial the previous conviction of any prisoner may be given in evidence at any stage. That is to say, in the year of grace 1888, a man is charged with picking another person's pocket, you may give evidence against him, that in 1830 he was guilty of bigamy. And what do you think is the reason given for this? Sir James Fitzjames Stephen says in his report to the Legislative Council: "it is said that evidence of this description may prejudice the prisoner. My answer is that if the prisoner is guilty"- mark the logic--"if the prisoner is guilty I do not see why he should not be prejudiced, the object of giving evidence against a man being to show whether he is guilty or not." And laws of this description have been passed, people have protested, but there is no heed paid to these protests.

Speaking of members of the Legislative Council appointed by Government, Mr. Bonnerjee told a funny anecdote :

One of these gentlemen was a very constant attendant at meetings of the Viceregal Legislative Council, and was one of the supporters upon whom the Government relied. One of his friends asked him how it was that he voted upon every question in a particular way, seeing that he did not understand a single word of what was taking place. His answer was : " It has been the pleasure of the Viceroy to instal me in this place as one of his Councillors, and it is my duty to vote for him on all occasions ". He was then asked how he knew the way in which the Viceroy wanted him to vote, and his answer was : " When the Viceroy lifts up his hand one way, I know he wants me to say ' Yes ', and I say ' Yes '; and when he lifts up his hand in a different way, I know he wants me to say ' No ', and I say ' No '."

If they ventured to vote against the wishes of the Government, this is what happened :

It is no use telling the civilized world that you have the people of India with you in your Councils. You know that these people of India are dependent for their position in the Councils and for their position in the country upon your good-will. If they do not support you, you never re-appoint them; you have things reported against them, and their life is a burden to them. Anyone now appointed to these Councils by the favour of the Government comes there with his life almost in his hand, because if he is found to be in any way independent he is not only not re-appointed but his position in the country is made intolerable for him.

That Indians have never had representative institutions is one of those fallacies which our leaders have time after time exploded, but which are still repeated by interested Anglo-Indian critics. Only the other day we were surprised to hear that this old libel was uttered by the Governor of Madras. So long ago as 1888, Mr. Bonnerjee had answered the charge:

I will only say that the objection which has been raised by some persons in this country and also in India of a conservative turn of mind that the people of India are not fit for the kind of Government Mr. Bradlaugh has in view, is of no force whatever. Any one who is acquainted with the village system of India knows that at a time when civilization was unknown in this country representative institutions of a kind obtained in that country. Representation is ingrained in the minds of the people. From the time the East India Company first obtained ascendency in the country they have not had many opportunities of giving effect to the principle, but it cannot be said that they have forgotten it. The village system, which is based upon representation, is still to be found in the country, and in some parts it is still in full operation.

From this arduous campaign in England he returned to India in time for the Congress Session held at Allahabad under the Presidency of Mr. George Yule whom he himself had persuaded to accept the onerous office. Not only the President of this year, but the Chairman of the Reception Committee, Pandit Ajudhia Nath, was Mr. Bonnerjee's acquisition for the Congress cause. In a speech of his own as President of a later Congress sitting in that very city, he told the story of their conversion :

With Pandit Ajudhianath has passed away that other great Congress leader, Mr. George Yule. These were the two most prominent figures in the Congress held in this city in 1888 : Pandit Ajudhianath as the Chairman of the Reception Committee ; Mr. Yule as the President of the Congress. It was my singular good fortune to have been the means of inducing both these gentlemen to espouse the Congress cause. I was here in April, 1887, and met Pandit Ajudhianath, who had not then expressed his views, one way or another, with regard to Congress matters. I discussed the matter with him. He listened to me with his usual courtesy and urbanity, and he pointed out to me certain defects which he thought existed in our system ; and, at last, after a sympathetic hearing of over an hour-and-a-half, he told me he would think of all I had said to him, and that he would consider the matter carefully and thoroughly, and then, let me know his views. I never heard anything from him from that time until on the eve of my departure for Madras to attend the Congress of 1887. I then received a letter from him in which he said I had made a convert of him to the Congress cause, that he had thoroughly made up his mind to join us, that he was anxious to go to Madras himself, but that illness pre-

vented him from doing so, and he sent a message that if it pleased the Congress to hold its next Sessions at Allahabad in 1888, he would do all he could to make the Congress a success. And you know—certainly, those of you who attended know—what a success he did make of it. Our venerable President of the Reception Committee of this present Congress has told us the difficulties which had to be encountered to make that Congress a success, and I do not belittle his services or those of any other worthy Congressman who worked with him at the Congress, when I say that it was owing to Pandit Ajudhianath's exertions that that Congress was the success it was.

When it was time to select a President for recommendation to the Congress of 1888, it was suggested to me, I being then in England, that I might ascertain the views of Mr. George Yule, and ask him to preside. I accordingly saw him at his Office in the city, and had the same kind of conversation with him as I had had, the year before, with Pandit Ajudhianath. He also listened to me kindly, courteously and sympathetically, and asked me to give him all the Congress literature I had. I had only the three Reports of the Congress Meetings of 1885, 1886 and 1887, and I sent these to him; and to my great joy, and, as it afterwards turned out, to the great benefit of the Congress, Mr. Yule came to see me at my house and told me that he entirely sympathised with the cause, and that, if elected to be the President of the Congress of that year, he would be proud of the position and would do what he could for us. Those who had the good fortune to attend the Congress of 1888, know how manfully and how well he sustained the duties of his position; how he pointed out that the chief plank in the Congress platform—namely, the reform and reconstitution of the Legislative Councils of this country—was by no means an invention on the part of the Congress; that that point had received the attention and had been favourably considered and spoken of by that marvellous English statesman, Benjamin Disraeli, Earl of Beaconsfield. He told us that we were treading on the footsteps of that great man, and that if we perseveringly stuck to our

colours, some time or other we should get what we wanted. From that time to the day of his death, Mr. Yule worked with us, gave us his valuable advice and helped us considerably as regards our working expenses. Pandit Ajudhianath, as you know, from the time he joined the Congress, worked early, worked late, worked with the old, worked with the young, never spared any personal sacrifices, so that he might do good to his country and to the Congress, and his lamented death came upon him when he was coming back from Nagpore, after having worked there for the success of the Nagpore Congress of last year. Those who ever so slightly knew Pandit Ajudhianath and Mr. Yule will never be able to forget the great services which those gentlemen rendered to the Congress cause.

In the 1888 Congress, however, Mr. Bonnerjee came upon the platform only once,—to move that the resolutions arrived at should be submitted to the Governments of India and England. From his speech on the occasion we will take only one passage counselling patience and moderation :

Now, Brother Delegates, one word more and I have done. Do not be cast down, do not be disheartened, if immediately you put forward a request it is not granted by those who are responsible for the good government of the country. Be patient, be moderate, be true to your cause and to yourselves. Remember that even now there are many reforms about which large majorities are agreed, which the English people are themselves asking for and which they have not yet got. If you are true to yourselves, if you are moderate, if you are reasonable in your demands, and if you go on agitating, agitating and agitating loyally and constitutionally, believing that the British public—and in that public I include our Anglo-Indian friends in this country—is a truth-loving and a justice-loving public, you will be sure to get what you are asking for in the end. Give a long pull, a strong

pull, and a pull altogether, and you reach the shores of victory in no time.

We are now brought to the Fifth Indian National Congress, one of the most memorable sittings it has had, memorable for the witty and sparkling address of Mr. Pherozeshah M. Mehta as Chairman of the Reception Committee, for the presidency of Sir W. Wedderburn, and for the presence and short, but animating, speech of Charles Bradlaugh. For the last blessing the country was indebted to Mr. Bonnerjee and the delegates knew it. He was, therefore, not the least remarkable among the remarkable men that sat round Sir W. Wedderburn. To him fell the honour of proposing the election of the President and he did so in a neat little speech which contained one of the few instances of humour to be discovered in his utterances,—a humour, however, which had been anticipated by Mr. Mehta on a similar occasion the preceding year.

If you look back to the Presidents that we have had from 1885, you will see that the selection of Sir William Wedderburn has been arrived at by a sort of logical process. The first Congress in 1885 was comparatively an insignificant one, and you were presided over on that occasion by an equally insignificant individual. The Second Congress had the honor of being presided over by one who has devoted the whole of his life to the cause of his country, and who, even in his old age, is at the present moment appealing

to the electors of one of the constituencies of England in order that, if returned to the House of Commons, he may be able still more effectively to serve that country. Can I name Dadabhai Naoroji without calling from you enthusiastic applause ? The third Congress was presided over by a gentleman of the Mahomedan persuasion, who, having distinguished himself at the Bar and in public life, was thought to be the fittest man to contradict the rumours that had been sedulously cast abroad that this was a Hindu Congress and that Mahomedan gentlemen had no sympathy with it. The next President ought, according to the process which we followed, to have been a gentleman belonging to the Eurasian community; but at the time when it became necessary to select a President, *the* man amongst the Eurasian community whom the whole of this country would have hailed with one voice as President of the Congress, Mr. D. S. White, was lying ill in bed; and while he was in that condition it would have been improper for us to ask any other Eurasian gentleman to take his place. Now, unfortunately, he is no more; and India has lost one of her brightest sons and best patriots in Mr. D. S. White. Failing Mr. White, we had to go to that other community in India—the Anglo-Indian community—and there we found our late respected President Mr. George Yule. Of him I need say no more than this, that having retired to England he is still devoting his time and his money to the furtherance of the cause of the Congress. From the non-official European community to the official European community is but a slight descent, but unfortunately it is impossible for us to get a gentleman at the time actually belonging to the official classes to guide our deliberations. However sympathetic they may be, however much they may wish success to the Congress, the rules of the service to which they belong prevent their publicly joining us and taking a prominent part in our proceedings. But ex-officials do not occupy such a restricted position: they are able to exercise their judgment in matters political. And we have in Sir William Wedderburn an ex-official who has throughout his career in this country, extending over 25 years, shown the deepest sympathy with the aspi-

rations of the people of this country, and who is one of the few men in the service who have had the eye to see and the heart to feel that the Government of India, conducted though it may be upon generous principles, is not all that is required for the best interests of the country, and that its institutions require to be liberalized in order that they may harmonize with the conditions of the present day.

He proposed this year another resolution praying for certain modifications in the rules and practices of the House of Commons and for the Indian Budget being brought before that House at an early date so as to secure an adequate discussion of Indian grievances. He then told the familiar story of the empty House with a personal reminiscence.

If the statement could be brought forward at an earlier date, many of the most influential members who take an interest in Indian affairs, would remain in London and take part in the discussion, but at present it is impossible that it should be so. I remember when I was present in the House last year, to listen to the Budget Statement, there was a time when the only members present were the Chairman of the Committee, Mr. Courteney, and Sir R. Lethbridge, who was addressing the empty benches of the House. There was not another soul present, Mr. Bradlaugh having withdrawn for two or three minutes to the smoking-room.

Though he had himself invited the Congress to assemble in Calcutta in 1890, illness and domestic affliction prevented his presence at its sitting. No doubt he was sorely missed and the sympathy of all the delegates went out to him.

Mr. Mano Mohan Ghose referred feelingly to his absence, and the President, Mr. Mehta, paid a compliment in his own inimitable fashion to his absent friend. At all previous Congresses, Mr. Bonnerjee had moved the re-appointment of Mr. A. O. Hume to the General Secretaryship, and as the time came round this year for a similar motion, it had to be passed on to another Congress veteran—Mr. Surendra Nath Bannerjee.

At the 1891 Congress at Nagpur, Mr. Bonnerjee moved some important propositions. The first embodied the determination of the country to hold a Congress every year in India 'until all necessary reforms have been secured.' This was against the suggestion of the British Congress Committee that the Indian sittings be suspended till the Congress should have assembled once in England. The second resolution he moved was to record the Congress's high estimate and deep appreciation of the great services of Mr. Dadabhai Naoroji and thank the electors of Central Finsbury and all others that had furthered his candidature. The entire speech is here :

Is there any one amongst you who has not heard the name of Dadabhai Naoroji, or, having heard it, does not revere it, does not love it, does not carry it about with him as a household word ? From the time when he was a

young man to the present day when he is over three score years old, he has devoted himself, his fortune, his talents, his life, one may say, to the cause of the country. There is no publicist among us who knows the economical condition of India so well as Mr. Dadabhai Naoroji. He has fought, and, in my opinion, fought successfully, many a tough battle with the adversaries of India. Chief amongst them was that very superior person Sir Mountstuart Elphinstone Grant-Duff, who, when he was in India, only corresponded with such high personages as Prince Bismarck and the Empress Frederick. Now Mr. Dadabhai Naoroji, not for any personal advantage to himself, but only for the sake of his country, has been trying for some years to get into the House of Commons, so that there, in the midst of the representatives of Great Britain herself, he may plead the cause of his native country. You know how difficult it is even for Englishmen to get into the House of Commons. He has failed once, but the spirit which led him to devote his life to his country is still in him and stirring him on to do the best he can to get a seat in the House of Commons. All that I ask you to do by this resolution is to say that you have your old confidence in the old man, and that you will be sincerely grateful to any constituency in Great Britain that will do itself the inestimable honor of sending Mr. Dadabhai Naoroji to the House of Commons.

The third resolution that he moved was his own by prescriptive right. Both Messrs. Hume and Pandit Ajudhia Nath had expressed a desire, owing to ill-health, to be relieved of their duties as general Secretary and Joint-General Secretary respectively. But Mr. Bonnerjee was able to announce that they had both yielded "to the persuasion that had been brought to bear on them." Of course, the persuasion could have come only from one source.

Next year (1892) the Congress Presidentship came round to him a second time,—a signal honour which only Dadabhai and Surendra Nath share with him. We have already quoted from his inaugural address. For a man generally averse 'to speechifying,' this effort was long; but it is packed full of good sense and sound wisdom. The success of Congress he attributed, above all other things, to the influences of British Rule.

The persons to whom I have referred have been troubling their brains, from almost the very commencement of the movement, to find out how it is that this movement, which they are pleased to call only a "native" movement, has been such a success. And they have hit upon one of the causes, which they have iterated and reiterated in season and out of season, as the cause of the success of the Congress; namely, the influence over us of that great man—Allan Octavian Hume. That Mr. Hume possesses, and has exercised, a vast amount of influence over the Congress movement, and over each single Congress which has met, is a fact. We are not only not ashamed to acknowledge it, but we acknowledge it with gratitude to that gentleman, and we are proud of his connection with the Congress. But the movement is only to some extent, and I may say, only to a limited extent, due to the influence which Mr. Hume has exercised over us. It is not the influence of this man, or of that man, or of any third man that has made the Congress what it is. It is the British professors who have discoursed eloquently to us on the glorious constitution of their country; it is the British merchants who have shown to us how well to deal with the commodities of our country; it is the British engineers who have annihilated distance and enabled us to come together for our deliberations from all parts of the Empire; it is the British

planters who have shown us how best to raise the products of our soil; it is all these, in other words, it is all the influences which emanate from British Rule in India that have made the Congress the success it is. The Congress is a mere manifestation of the good work that has been done by all those to whom I have referred (and I ought also to have referred to the British missionaries who have worked amongst us); and all that we wish by this movement to do, is to ask the British public, both in this country and in Great Britain, that, without any strain on the connection which exists between Great Britain and this country, such measures may be adopted by the ruling authorities that the grievances under which we labour may be removed, and that we may hereafter have the same facilities of national life that exist in Great Britain herself. How long it will take us to reach the latter end no one can tell; but it is our duty to keep the hope of it before us, and keep reminding our British fellow-subjects that this hope shall always be with us.

Mr. Bonnerjee held somewhat peculiar views on Social Reform. He did not believe in public discussion of social questions, and felt that each separate community had its own troubles for which it ought to find its own solution. So he was averse to the Congress, as such, concerning itself with these vital and thorny problems.

I am one of those who have very little faith in the public discussion of social matters; those are things which, I think, ought to be left to the individuals of a community who belong to the same social organisation, to do what they can for its improvement. We know how excited people become when social subjects are discussed in public. Not long ago we had an instance of this when what was called the Age of Consent Bill was introduced into the Viceregal Legislative Council. I do not propose to say one word as to the merits of the controversy that arose over that measure, but I

allude to it to illustrate how apt the public mind is to get agitated over these social matters if they are discussed in a hostile and unfriendly spirit in public.

I may point out that we do not all understand in the same sense what is meant by social reform. Some of us are anxious that our daughters should have the same education as our sons, that they should go to Universities, that they should adopt learned professions; others, who are more timid, would be content with seeing that their children are not given in marriage when very young, and that child-widows should not remain widows all the days of their lives. Others, more timid still, would allow social problems to solve themselves. It is impossible to get any common ground even as regards the members of the same community, be it Hindu, Mahomedan or Parsee with respect to these matters. Thus it was that social questions were left out of the Congress programme ; thus it was that the Congress commenced and has since remained, and will, I sincerely trust, always remain as a purely political organisation, devoting its energies to political matters, and political matters only. I am afraid that those, whether belonging to our own country or to any other country, who find fault with us for not making social subjects a part of our work, cherish a secret wish that we might all be set by the ears as we were all set by the ears by the Age of Consent Bill, and that thus we might come to an ignominious end. They mean us no good, and when we find critics of that description talking of the Congress as only fit to discuss social problems, I think the wider the berth we give them the better.

Touching the recently agitated question, whether India ought to be a party question in British politics, Mr. Bonnerjee held decided views.

The Cabinet is so troubled with the affairs of the vast British Empire that the members really have no time to devote to India as a body, and leave her to their colleague, he Secretary of State for India. When any Indian

question comes before the House of Commons, what do we see? The Cabinet of the day has always a majority in the House, and it always finds supporters among its own party, whether they are would-be placemen or whether they are country gentlemen who go to the House of Commons as the best Club in England. And in non-party matters—and they make it a pretence in the House of Commons to regard Indian affairs as matters non-party, —in all non-party matters, the Government of the day can always rely upon a large amount of support from the Opposition. There are a few members of the House of Commons who make it a point to devote a portion of their time and energies to the consideration of Indian questions. But they are only a few; they have hardly any following; and if they press any matters on the attention of the House, with any degree of zeal, they are voted down as bores by the rest of the House of Commons.

He held forth at length on matters of civil and criminal justice with which he had unequalled familiarity. Of the infamous Jury Notification of Sir Charles Elliott he had many hard things to say, of which the concluding observation is too good to be omitted.

It is said that trial by jury is foreign to this country. We who have cherished our Punchayet system for generations, to be told that trial by jury is foreign to us, to be told so at the fag-end of the nineteenth century why, it is strange indeed! No, no, gentlemen—it was on our Punchayet system that Lord Cornwallis proceeded when in 1790 he ruled that we should have trial by jury. It was on that system that Sir Thomas Munro based his regulation which his successor promulgated in 1827. It was on that system that the Bombay regulation on the subject was introduced, and when these regulations were codified in 1861, it was on that system the law was based. We must have the

system extended to the whole country and not withdrawn from any part of it, and we must therefore join together and agitate on the subject from one end of India to the other, and say, that this notification, which has given rise to so much discontent, was not required, and that it should be withdrawn, and withdrawn as speedily as possible and the policy of which it is the outcome reversed.

The Congresses of 1893 and 1894 Mr. Bonnerjee did not attend. In 1895 at the Poona sitting he moved an important proposition on the system of trial by jury, giving in brief the history of the system in India and condemning in scathing terms the proposal of Sir Alexander Miller to empower District Judges to call upon juries to give special verdicts. The whole passage dealing with this last subject is worth reproducing.

Suddenly early this year Sir Alexander Miller introduced a Bill in the Supreme Council, one of the provisions of which is that juries should be called upon to give special verdicts. Juries should be called upon to give a general verdict, and if the Judge is not satisfied with it, he may ask questions and get answers to those questions in the shape of special verdicts. In other words, I cannot help feeling that it is intended to allow a Judge, if he differs from the verdit of juries, the power of cross-examining jurymen and putting them into a corner. Now, we may well say whether a person is telling the truth; we may very well arrive at a conclusion whether a case made against a prisoner is a true case or a false one. Five men, perfectly indifferent to the prisoner and perfectly indifferent to the Crown, may be expected to arrive at a right verdict; but unless they are trained lawyers, unless they have the logical faculty of assign-

ing reasons for their opinions in taking a shape, you cannot expect the jurymen to give such verdicts as would be acceptable to everybody; and if a juryman gives reasons which are not acceptable and which appear on the face of them to be foolish, the Judge would go to the High Court and say, "Look at the verdict, look at the reasons which these men have given for the verdict; they are foolish and their verdict must be upset," though their verdict may be perfectly just under the circumstances.

I was trying, with the help of a friend of mine, whom I am glad to see present here, to find from Cox's Criminal Reports whether in England there is such a thing as special verdicts in criminal cases. We find hundreds of special verdicts in civil cases, but we could not find from the beginning of the existence of the English nation down to the present time a single case of a special verdict in a criminal case. When you consider, gentlemen, that in this country we are almost free from serious crimes, and when you consider that the percentage of crime is as low as it is possible to imagine, and when you consider, on the other hand, that the percentage of crime in England is as great as can be imagined—while you have in England no such special verdicts in criminal cases, we are to have special verdicts in criminal cases in this country! Therefore, I say, we all ought to unite in protesting against those changes in criminal law that are being made, and what is worse, are being threatened almost every day. We, from this Congress, ought to send up a strong protest against a thing of this description. For, after all, as my friend Mr. Ghose has so well put it, the real popularity of British Rule and the real reason of the loyalty of the people are the belief on the part of the people that justice, criminal justice is being administered in a fair and impartial way. If, you interfere with these things so often, and interfere needlessly,and interfere with the view of putting more power into the hands of District Magistrates and District Judges, that confidence in the impartiality of British justice will be destroyed and we shall be brought to a position which I fear to contemplate.

At the 1896 Congress in Calcutta, Mr. Bonnerjee moved a proposition expressing the country's confidence in Mr. Dadabhai Naoroji and wishing his re-election to Parliament. His speech on the occasion must be given to our readers entire.

This resolution was entrusted to me without my consent and in spite of my remonstrances. I believe myself that our Subjects Committee were, at the last moment when they made up their minds to force this upon me, under fatalistic influences. I remember I moved a similar resolution in the Congress of 1891, which was received as enthusiastically as this has been received by you to-day. In 1892 there was a General Election in England, and Mr. Dadabhai Naoroji was returned at the head of the poll as member for Central Finsbury. I suppose the Subjects Committee thought that if this resolution was again brought before you, and brought before you by the same individual who presented it to you in 1891, a similar result might follow. At any rate, here is the resolution, and I can only say that it does not require any words from any one to make it acceptable to you. The example that Mr. Dadabhai Naoroji has set us all is perfectly unique. Here is an old man, over 70 years of age, working, you may say day and night, night and day, for the benefit of his countrymen. He has had to banish himself from his own country and live in a foreign land, away from his old friends, only for the sake of this country. Some little time ago our only Member of Parliament, that is to say, the only Indian gentleman who succeeded in finding a seat at the last election—Mr. Bhownagri—came back to this country, and some foolish friends of his wanted to get up a demonstration in his honour to equal the demonstration which Mr. Dadabhai Naoroji received when he came to his country to preside over the Lahore Congress. I have no quarrel whatever with Mr. Bhownagri. I am very proud to know that

a native of this country is a Member of the House of Commons. You cannot expect everybody to be of the same opinion as yourself. I should have been very pleased if, instead of being a Conservative, Mr. Bhownagri had been a Radical. But then I am sure that if he had been a Radical, he would not have obtained a seat in the House of Commons at the last election. So there is, perhaps, some advantage in his having been a Conservative. But for any friend of Mr. Bhownagri to consider that he is the Member for India, or that he possesses the confidence of the people of India that Mr. Dadabhai Naoroji possesses, is an absurdity. Very few people have heard of Mr. Bhownagri outside the Bombay Presidency; and although we all rejoice that he is in the House of Commons, and although we all hope that he will be of service there, we cannot but hope and trust that we may find our Dadabhai there before long. Nothing will content us but to have the old man sitting again in the House of Commons doing his duty to his constituents, and doing his work for his country. One reason why he failed to secure his seat in the House of Commons this time was that, while he was discharging his duties night after night, his opponent, who has now been successful, was canvassing the constituency, and trying to take away support from him, and obtain it for himself. I hope you will carry the resolution with acclamation, and carry away a hope that Mr. Dadabhai Naoroji will soon obtain a seat in the House of Commons.

The Sedition Law of Mr. Chalmers, of which the occasion was Mr. Tilak's conviction, was on the legislative anvil in 1897, and the delicate duty of moving the Congress Resolution on the subject was entrusted to Mr. Bonnerjee.

Mr. Chalmers, to make his proposed amendment of the law palatable to us, says that his only object in proposing the amendments is to assimilate the law of sedition in this country with the law on the same subject as it exists in England. Well, I have no objection at all to the law

of sedition in this country being made the same as the law of sedition in England, provided, of course, Mr. Chalmers gives us in this country the same machinery for the administration of the law here as exists in England. In England, as we all know, trials for sedition are held before a judge, who is a countryman of the prisoner, and by a jury, who are also countrymen of the prisoner, and no trial can take place unless a true bill has been found against the prisoner by a grand jury, who are also countrymen of the prisoner. Let Mr. Chalmers give us this mode of trial, and we shall hail him, however severe he may make the law, as the greatest law-giver that has ever come to this country. But does he intend to do so ? No. So far from doing so, he is trying in his amendments of the Criminal Procedure Code to empower district magistrates to try cases of sedition—district magistrates who are officers of Government in the strict sense of the term and whose promotion entirely depends upon the good-will of the Government for the time being. The present machinery for trial of cases of sedition in this country is bad enough in all conscience. In the Presidency towns such trials must be had by jury. But so far as Her Majesty's British Indian subjects are concerned, that jury may consist entirely of Europeans, and not a single one of them need know the language in which the seditious speech is alleged to have been made or the seditious article to have been written. That is appalling enough, but to entrust trials for sedition to district magistrates is still more appalling. I do not think,—I say so with all submission to Mr. Chalmers,—that his Bill proceeds on the lines of the English law of sedition at all. He is entirely mistaken in thinking it does. But assuming it does, Mr. Chalmers is prepared to give us the poison in the shape of his amendment, and not the antidote to the poison in the shape of the English machinery for its administration.

Then, in his concluding paragraph, he touched a deeper chord of feeling than ever he had done before and assumed a tone that he had never been

compelled to assume,—betraying that even his calm head and tranquil heart had been sorely agitated.

I should have thought that seeing that the country has just been passing through the last of a very severe affliction in the shape of famine, that there has been a recrudescence of the plague in various parts of it, and that other circumstances, notably the press prosecutions in the Bombay Presidency, have stirred the mind of the people to its very depth, this is just the time where a wise legislator, even if there was necessity for it, would hesitate long before embarking on a process of action which is sure to give rise, as Mr. Chalmers' Bill has undoubtedly given rise, to great terror on the part of the people. But we, of course, according to our rulers, have no idea of the proper time and occasion for changes in the law. Lord Elgin's Government are all wise, and I am afraid that, notwithstanding our protest, and I make bold to say the protest of every right-thinking person in the country which will go to the Government, this Bill will be forced into law. All the protests will be in vain. We must, however, carry our protest before a higher authority than even Lord Elgin's Government. We must go before the British public. We must explain to them how the agents they have sent to govern the country on their behalf and in their name are dealing with the people; that is, dealing in a manner wholly unworthy of the British name and the British love of freedom. And if we can convince them that we are right, I have no doubt that the British nation will rise in their wrath and free us from the trammels which Lord Elgin and his Councillors are forging for us.

That was the last time his voice was heard in the Councils of the Indian National Congress which he loved so well. From the year 1888 he took a trip every year to England during the

puja holidays. He had bought a house of his own at Croydon which soon became a frequent meeting-place of all Indians in England. His children were all educated in England. In fact, he had so completely Anglicised himself that the one regret with which his memory is associated in the minds of a certain section of his countrymen, is that his ideals of life should have been cast in a mould so entirely alien to them. Even they acknowledge, nevertheless, the depth and sincerity of his feelings for all his orthodox relations and the liberality with which he defrayed the expenses of their numerous ceremonial observances. It has even been said, with a great deal of probability, that his spiritual isolation from his own kith and kin often brought tears to his eyes. To his mother he cherished to the last the tenderest filial affection. Notwithstanding these strong ties, Mr. Bonnerjee resolved in 1902 to quit India altogether and take up his residence permanently in England. In a short time he picked up a considerable Privy Council practice. The British Committee of the National Congress occupied a great part of his energy and time; and, as has been more than once observed, India will never know the exact amount of her pecuniary indebtedness to him. He sought

a place in Parliament that he might be of greater use to his country, but, unfortunately, while he was wooing the electors of Walthamstow, an affection of the eye developed and brought his general health low. He recognised the hand of Death in this attack and wrote to Mr. Dutt at Baroda that his illness was incurable and that the end was near. So it proved. On July 21, this year, he passed away in peace.

It is impossible to close this sketch without making a quotation from the patriot's last message to the Congress which met at Benares last December. Patience and hope were the theme of the short letter which each Congressman read and re-read as if it were addressed to himself.

It seems to me that we are passing through critical times in India and that we ought to exert our best to make the events that are happening further the cause of our country and to enable the Congress fully to achieve the ends for which it was established now 21 years ago. Young people are apt to feel disheartened because no immediate result is visible in any agitation they may undertake. They forget that existing institutions cannot be changed without years of patient struggle in endeavouring to convince those who are guardians of the institutions that their alteration and reform would be of benefit to the country. What we have to keep in mind is that the mere fact that we desire self-governing institutions for our country is not enough of itself to justify the grant of such institutions of our Rulers to us. We have to show that our progress has been such

that the grant of such institutions would be an advantage alike to India and to England. We ought to call to mind that in the early days of what are now the self-governing colonies they were mere crown colonies and that they were not invested with the privileges, duties and responsibilities of self-government until long afterwards. The early settlers in these colonies were emigrants from Great Britain and belonged to the same race and had been trained in the same way as those that remaind in the mother country, and yet self-governing institutions were not conferred on them immediately they demanded them. They waited and agitated, agitated and waited, and at last got what they wanted. We do not belong to the ruling race and have never been brought up in the same way as they have been. Our case, therefore, is more difficult of achievement than that of self-governing colonies, and we must wait and agitate, agitate and wait longer than they were destined to do. With patience, preseverance and persistence, I am sure we shall reach the goal of our desires in time and, therefore, we must never lose heart. Your recent visit to this country must have shown you that the people you came across both in your public meetings and privately are disposed to be just—yea generous—towards our aspirations, all that is required is that we must show to them that we are capable of self-government. The members of the Congress are rightly convinced that we are, and if we keep up our agitation and prefer our demands in season and out of season, thus showing that we are in earnest about the matter, I am sure we shall succeed in convincing the British public that our desire for self-governing institutions is just and legitimate, that we are capable of understanding and working these institutions and that the grant of them to us would be alike beneficial to our country and to England, and once convinced of these facts the British public, you may be sure, will not long hesitate to invest us with these institutions. To convince the British public that we are in earnest, a constant agitation of matters Indian ought to be kept up in this country, for it is the British public who are alone capable of giving what we want; and to show to them that

our agitation in this country is based upon a solid foundation, strong agitation on the lines laid down by the Congress must be kept up in India. The agitation in India must be the lever on which the agitation of this country must be worked. Let me, therefore, implore you to impress upon our Congressmen from your Presidential chair the necessity of maintaining the Congress, of keeping up the agitation in India on the lines laid down by it, and of vigorously continuing the agitation in this country.

Adorned with every virtue, public and private, placed by fortune in towering eminence, and endowed with the greatest gifts of head and heart, Mr. Bonnerjee acted through life on the conviction that all his virtues, fortune, and gifts found their noblest use only in the furtherance of his country's interests. He will have lived in vain indeed if, reading of him, the generations that are to come do not learn to regard their talents and opportunities as a sacred trust for the honour and glory of their motherland.—*Vande Mataram.*

Mr. Gokhale on Mr. Bonnerjee.*

——: o :——

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,—We are assembled here to-day to give public expression to our grief that the hand of Death has removed from our midst our illustrious countryman,—Mr. Womesh Chandra Bonnerjee. The event, it is true, has not come upon us as wholly unexpected. For some time past it was well known that Mr. Bonnerjee's health has been completely shattered, that there was no hope of recovery, and that continued existence in that state was to him only a prolongation of agony. However, now that the end has actually come, and we are forced to realise that our great and trusted leader, whom it was a joy to love no less than to follow, is no more with us, the mind feels as completely bewildered and overwhelmed as though the great Destroyer had come with stealthy and noiseless steps and had inflicted on us our loss without warning, and with the shock of a sudden blow. Ladies and gentlemen, Mr. Bonnerjee was a man whose death would leave humanity the poorer in any age and in any part of the world. To India, in her present stage of transition, with difficult and complicated problems arising on all sides, his passing away is a national calamity of the first magnitude, and we indulge in no exaggeration when we say that our loss is truly irreparable. It is not my purpose to-day to attempt here an estimate of the character and career of our great countryman. Our loss is still too fresh and our sense of it too acute and poignant to permit of my undertaking any such task in a meeting of this kind. And all I beg leave to do in commending this resolution to your acceptance is to say a few words expres-

* Speech delivered by Mr. Gokhale at a Memorial Meeting held in London for expressing sorrow at the death of Mr. W. C. Bonnerjee.

sive of my profound admiration of the many noble qualities, both natural and acquired, of our departed leader, and of my humble appreciation of the great, the signal services which he has rendered to our national cause. Ladies and gentlemen, we all know that Mr. Bonnerjee was one of the most distinguished, as he was one of the most successful, lawyers that our country has produced. Now, if he had been only that and nothing else, even then his title to a public expression of our admiration and respect would have been unquestioned. National life, to be complete, must be many-sided ; and a man who brings honour to the Indian name no matter in what field, advances thereby our national cause and deserves to be honoured by us on national grounds. But Mr. Bonnerjee's claim to our admiration and gratitude rested, of course, on a much wider basis than his pre-eminent attainment as a lawyer. He was, in addition, an ardent patriot, a wise and far-sighted leader, an incessant worker, a man whose nobility of mind and greatness of soul were stamped on every utterance and every action of his life. His intellectual gifts were of the very highest order. Endowed with an intellect at once critical, vigorous, and comprehensive, a truly marvellous memory, luminous powers of exposition, captivating eloquence, great industry, and a wonderful habit of method and discipline, Mr. Bonnerjee was bound to achieve, in whatever field he chose to work, the most brilliant success. Then he had a wide outlook on life, deep and earnest feeling and a passionate desire to devote his great gifts to the service of his country. And added to these were a fine presence, an extraordinary charm of manner, and that combination of strength and restraint which made him one of the most manly men that one could come across. Such a man must tower above his fellow-men wherever he is placed. In a self-governing country he would, without doubt, have attained the position of Prime Minister. We in India twice made him President of our National Congress, and what was more, when the great movement was started twenty-one years ago and the first Congress ever held in India assembled in Bombay, the delegates unanimously elected Mr. Bonnerjee to guide them in their deliberations. And since that time down to the moment of his

death, Mr. Bonnerjee, with two or three others, was the very life and soul of that movement. He ungrudgingly gave to the cause his time and his resources—and this far more than is generally known. He cheerfully bore all its anxieties, his exertions for its success were unwearied, and no man's counsel was valued higher by his countrymen, where the Congress was concerned. His courage was splendid, and it rose with difficulties, and his nerve and his clear judgment were a theme of constant admiration among his countrymen. With Mr. Bonnerjee at the helm, everyone felt safe. His was the eloquence that thrills and stirs and inspires, but his was also the practical sagacity that sees the difference between what may be attained and what cannot, and when the need arose no man was firmer than Mr. Bonnerjee in exercising a sobering and restraining influence. I can recall at this moment more than one meeting of the Subjects Committee of the Congress, at which really all important deliberations take place, where Mr. Bonnerjee's far-sighted wisdom and the great weight attaching to his personality steadied the judgments of wilder spirits, and established harmony where discord was apprehended. The loss of such a leader, no words that I can employ can adequately describe, and he has passed away at a time when he was more indispensable than ever, in view of the signs one sees of the vessel of the Congress being about to encounter somewhat rough weather. Ladies and gentlemen, it is really superfluous that I should dwell at any length before an assembly composed so largely of my own countrymen on the distinguished services rendered by Mr. Bonnerjee to our national cause. And, if I refer briefly to one or two of them, it is because they are not very widely known, and they illustrate how immense is the debt that we owe him. You are aware that no Englishman has ever served India more nobly or more zealously than the late Mr. Bradlaugh. Now, it was Mr. Bonnerjee who enlisted Mr. Bradlaugh's sympathies on our side and secured his powerful championship for our aspirations. Then the part Mr. Bonnerjee has played in keeping together all these years the British Committee of the Congress and in maintaining unimpaired its activity in this country, will always constitute one of his

best claims to our affection and gratitude. Very few, indeed, of our countrymen have any idea of the difficulties that have had to be overcome from time to time in this connection, of the worries they have involved, and of the sacrifices they have required. But, if our great friends, Sir William Wedderburn and Mr. Hume had been here to-day, they would have told you, as, indeed, our venerable chairman may, if he speaks a few words at the end, how invaluable have been Mr. Bonnerjee's co-operation and assistance in this matter. Ladies and gentlemen, I do not wish to detain you longer. Many of us lose in Mr. Bonnerjee not only a great leader, but also a warm generous friend. Who that has ever enjoyed the hospitality of his beautiful home at Croydon—now, alas, plunged into the depths of grief—will forget the singular charm of his personality, the charity of his judgments, his touching devotion to those around him, or the kindness he loved to lavish on all whom he admitted to the privilege of his friendship! And, speaking in this connection, may I say how our hearts go out to-day to the bereaved family, whose loss is beyond words, and especially to that stricken lady whose life has now been rendered desolate and to whom the world will never be the same again! One word more and I have done. Mr. Bonnerjee has now crossed the line which there is no recrossing. But he is not altogether gone from us. He has left us the precious inheritance of a noble example. He has left us his name to honour, his memory to cherish. Above all, he has left us the cause—the cause he loved so dearly and served so well. Our very sorrow today speaks to us of our duty to that cause and no tribute that we can offer to the memory of the departed will be more truly fitting than a resolve to recognize and an endeavour to discharge this duty according to the measure of our capacity and the requirements of our country.

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